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by John P. Sisk

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by Robert A. Graham
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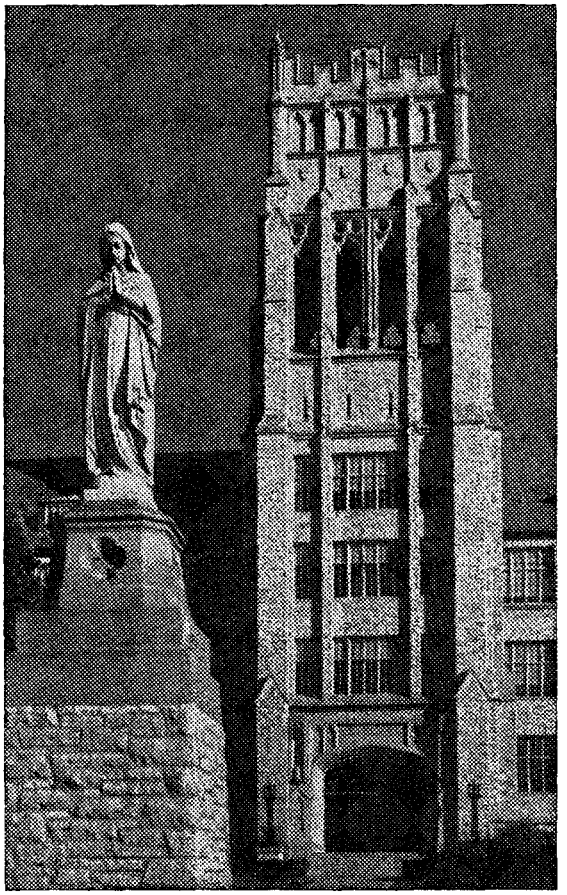

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

OBSCENITY AND FREEDOM

IN RECENT WEEKS the news has been dominated by Supreme Court decisions, especially those relating to the conflict between individual rights and governmental authority. The Jencks, Watkins and Smith Act decisions all ruled in favor of the individual and liberty rather than the State and security. A great outcry has greeted these decisions—a voicing of impassioned approval and disapproval, with the disapproval noticeably louder, if not more widespread. The inescapably "liberal trend" of the Court suggested by these decisions is universally the subject of furious debate and speculation.

The "liberal trend" is there, undoubtedly, and this fact makes even more noteworthy the much less discussed obscenity rulings by the Court. These were decisions which ran counter to the disposition of the Court evident in the Jencks, Watkins and Smith Act cases: they show a more limited view of the extent of the personal liberties guaranteed in the Constitution; they decide against individual freedom and in favor of governmental regulation.

The obscenity cases decided by the Justices were dealt with in two decisions, the first written by Justice Brennan and the second by Justice Frankfurter, with the majority statements in both instances accompanied by additional statements of concurrence and dissent. Despite the fact that Federal and state anti-obscenity statutes have been in existence for years, this was the first time the Court had dealt directly with the constitutionality of such statutes under the First Amendment.

The first opinion upheld a Federal obscenity statute and a California law against keeping for sale or advertising obscene literature. In it, Justice Brennan held that "obscenity"—material that is related to "overt anti-social conduct"—is not protected by the First Amendment. Mr. Warren concurred, but felt that the language of this opinion was dangerously vague and might "eventually be applied to the arts and sciences and freedom of communication generally." In dissent, Justice Douglas asked, "What is the constitutional test of obscenity?"

In the second majority opinion, Justice Frankfurter supported the right of New York police agents to apply injunctions prior to trial and to seize copies of books held to be obscene. Justice Brennan dissented, here, on the grounds that jury trial was bypassed, and Justice Warren dissented separately on the grounds that the New York procedure amounted to "prior restraint."

WHAT WILL BE the result of these decisions? They have brought out the issues more clearly than ever in regard to censorship, but those who looked for a solution to the problem must be sadly disappointed. It is surely true that the First Amendment was designed primarily to protect the interchange of ideas and specifically to prevent the "prior restraint" of government licensing or censorship. It is also true that the language of the first decision is broad, as Justices Warren and Douglas complained, and represents a possible threat to artistic, or even simply personal, freedom of utterance. Judgment in these matters depends on a complex of values—moral, literary and social standards—which are subject to wide variation, even downright opposition, among the citizens of a society such as ours. There is no legally defined standard, and the Court's decision, despite its firm tone, offers no help in devising one.

The absence of such a standard is pertinent also to the second decision cited. We may ask how, in a society which knows no official standard in regard

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to obscenity, can the power to judge it be entrusted to public officials? It is true that there is often no great problem in deciding if a book is obscene, and if there is a dispute even a pluralist society is not helpless—it can and does work out a consensus, a provisional minimal standard. But this working out demands, it would seem, a cautious juridical procedure, one giving sufficient regard to the danger of prior restraint.

One of the most inflammatory issues of the day remains, therefore, as difficult and dangerous as ever. Freedom of the press is vital to the health of a democracy; infringement of it can never be other than dangerous and must be guarded against almost at all costs. On the other hand, the flood of obscene literature which increasingly threatens and affronts public decency is also an evil to be guarded against.

Is this a stalemate, with freedom to publish and disseminate obscene writings the inevitable price of freedom of speech in other areas, with suffering the abuse of a right the necessary corollary to the protection of the right itself?

Rather than a stalemate, it is a question of balance. Public decency must be safeguarded without violating the rights of individuals. Individual cases involving obscenity must be dealt with according to specific juridical procedure, especially that of jury trial, and the working consensus arrived at without imposing an arbitrary single standard on the pluralist community. In most instances, we suspect, the consensus will be arrived at fairly easily. In the others, the borderline cases, we must rely on the machinery of American justice.

Such a course does not appeal to the zealots of either camp—those who demand freedom at any cost and those who will have protection at any cost. It seems to be the only course, however, for those who value freedom, art *and* decency. That which is clearly obscenity, in the eyes of many, may be permitted to circulate in this country for a perilously long time, perhaps always. Serious works of art may be demeaned and suppressed, to our considerable detriment. But we can have faith that freedom will not be lost, art will not be fettered for long, and indecency will not flourish without check.

NEXT WEEK

C. K. YEARLEY, JR. writes about the changing balance of power and the future of Asia.

"The nationalist zeal so recently dedicated to the battles of national liberation in Asia is rapidly being channeled into the exploitation of resources and the development of industrial establishments. This fact adds tremendous new variables to the global balance of power."

INTER-SERVICE DISPUTE

GIVEN THE severe charges that were brought against him initially and the maximum sentence that could have been imposed, Colonel John C. Nickerson, Jr., received an extremely light sentence. The Army withdrew charges of espionage and perjury, and Colonel Nickerson pleaded guilty to charges of violating security regulations. In view of his fine past record and good intentions he was suspended from his rank for one year and fined.

More important than Colonel Nickerson and his sentence is the issue which brought him to trial by court-martial, the heated dispute between the Army and the Air Force. Both of these services had been working on intermediate range missiles and had put forth conflicting claims and demands. Defense Secretary Charles Wilson decided, late last year, in favor of the Air Force. Many Army men were disturbed and unhappy about this decision. Aware of this, General John Medoris, commander of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency, ordered his men not to challenge the decision nor to engage in public controversy over it.

Colonel Nickerson, however, wrote a brief, "Considerations on the Wilson Memorandum," and distributed it to several Congressmen and newspaper men. In support of his contention that the Army missile was superior to that of the Air Force, he cited some classified material. When he was arrested, he said he couldn't believe that "all this is happening to a man whose only crime is loving the Army too much."

Later Colonel Nickerson said he was guilty and deserved punishment. General Medoris said, "I question whether his judgment can be tempered. I have no idea how much he has learned that the end does not justify the means."

Such statements and actions reveal how severely the dissension has disturbed one of the services, how disruptive are such rivalries. Greater unification of the armed services might, as some fear, make the repression of information too easy and lead to an unduly concentrated power. But the present situation obviously leads to wasteful competition, disruptive rivalries, contradictory and con-

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fusing news stories, and—as in the Nickerson case—the misuse of classified information. The Nickerson case is merely the most notable instance of the weaknesses that must be corrected in our armed services.

THE MAN WHO SAID "NO"

THERE IS an old story, probably apocryphal, about a Hollywood studio head who liked men around him with the courage to say "no"—even though it cost them their jobs. Washington may not be Hollywood, but during his seven years on the Atomic Energy Commission Thomas E. Murray said "no" many times, and it apparently cost him his job. A.E.C. Chairman Lewis L. Strauss, by all reports, likes "no-men" about as much as a Hollywood studio czar. But if he hoped he had heard the last of Mr. Murray, he is going to be disappointed.

Many members of the potent Senate-House Atomic Energy Committee have long been unhappy with Mr. Strauss. They are not satisfied with many A.E.C. decisions, and they have a strong conviction that Mr. Strauss has on occasion been less than frank with the Congress. Immediately after his term of office with the A.E.C. expired, therefore, Mr. Murray was offered and promptly accepted the post of consultant to the Committee. Mr. Strauss and the nation will be hearing more from Mr. Murray.

We welcome the news of this appointment. There are any number of conflicting views on such vital questions as the merits of suspending nuclear tests, the dangers of fallout, and the peaceful uses of atomic energy, and each view seems to have any number of scientists ready to back it to the death. It is small wonder, then, that the non-scientific layman is confused, and there is a great need for additional public discussion on these matters of vital national and world interest.

Mr. Murray has always shown a scientifically sound and morally informed approach to nuclear problems. Typically, he took the occasion of his retirement from the Atomic Energy Commission to denounce as "irrational" and "indefensibly reckless" Administration proposals to suspend all nuclear tests and cease the manufacture of all nuclear weapons. In place of this plan, he called for a multi-billion dollar expansion of small atomic-weapons production to give the nation a stockpile of "tens of thousands" of such weapons which could be used in a limited war.

The immediate cessation of all nuclear tests has its obvious attractions, and Mr. Murray's proposals may shock very many people. Yet his point seems quite clear. He fears above all a situation in which the only weapon available to us is the total weapon, to be used in total war. His proposal, then, is not a plea for war and mass destruction, but an attempt to reduce the risk of a total war. Seen in this light, Mr. Murray's proposal certainly deserves attention and serious thought. And it illustrates why the nation is better off because he has not in fact been silenced for having dared to say "no" when occasion demanded.

THE MELISH CASE

THE EPISCOPAL Church in the New York area has for a long time been having an internal battle over what has come to be called the Melish case. At issue has been the effort of the Episcopal diocese to remove a clergyman long accused of Communist sympathies, and the determined attempt of the clergyman in question and of his followers to prevent this removal. We have no desire or intention to intrude ourselves into this controversy, but in recent hearings a point of law came up which should be of interest to all.

When the Melish case reached the civil courts, it was found that a conflict existed between the law of the state of New York and General Canon No. 11 of the Episcopal Church, both relating to the method of election of a church rector. According to New York law, the clergyman designated by the diocese to replace the accused rector was illegally elected, because a quorum as defined by the pertinent New York law was not present. But according to the Episcopal Canon, the conditions required for a valid election were fulfilled and the rector chosen by the diocese properly elected. Last year a New York court held in favor of the controversial clergyman and against the Episcopal diocese. Later a court-appointed referee made the same finding. Most recently, however, the Appellate Division of the State Supreme Court has reversed the previous decisions and declared that election valid which conformed to the provisions laid down by the Episcopal Canon.

Without any reference to the personalities or politics of this particular case, this decision seems to us eminently proper. If it stands, the decision will mean that an Episcopalian rector accused of pro-Communist sympathies will be ousted from his post. But there is an even larger point involved

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here. In the extreme case of sects with dangerous or obviously anti-social practices—those which practice snake-handling come to mind—the state may legitimately exercise some kind of restrictive power to protect the citizenry. But normally matters of internal religious discipline are not within the competence of the state and should not be decided according to rules made by the state. If, as in this case, the New York state law pertaining to religious corporations conflicts with Canon law, it is not Canon law which should be amended. To say otherwise would, it seems to us, give to the state power that is not proper to it, and such a decision would therefore constitute a very real departure from the best American tradition in these matters.

FREE CRITICISM IN CHINA

HISTORY HAS moved rapidly in Communist countries within recent months, catching both Communist and non-Communist observers and commentators by surprise. Nikita Khrushchev's downgrading of Stalin, the Poznan riots and the Hungarian massacre were, in varying degrees, surprising to the whole world and disconcerting to Communist apologists.

Now Mao Tse-tung's speech inviting criticism of the present Chinese Communist regime has brought new, though admittedly lesser, problems to these apologists. The difficulties are made eminently clear in the pages of the *Daily Worker*. For after Mao's speech, the people of China indulged in the new freedom accorded them; criticism of the regime was strong and plentiful. This is how it was described in the *Worker*.

"Let's put it this way: suppose the Republican Party publically invited the Democrats, the Socialists, the Communists, as well as any and all social, fraternal, academic and scientific organizations and institutions to state their beefs against the Administration. Suppose this were done . . . and it was all published in the nation's leading newspapers, front-page, for several weeks running.

"Of course this is sheer fantasy for America today, but if you can imagine it this is roughly the equivalent of what is going on in China right now."

This apologist was, of course, correct in saying that this would be "sheer fantasy for America," for where strong criticism of the Administration is expected every-day fare, it is rarely front-page news. And no political party in this country is so free from criticism that it need extend invitations in order to receive more. Such "invitations" belong solely to totalitarian regimes which must announce the little, new freedoms they allow with as much fanfare as possible.

But the *Worker* correspondent drew another moral: "No Administration would stick its neck out unless it were very sure of the backing of the people. The spirit in which the criticisms are being voiced would seem to fully justify this confidence."

Unfortunately for the *Daily Worker* writer, events rapidly compromised his statement, for the Chinese Communist regime soon became anxious over the intense criticism it was receiving. Government action was taken against dissident groups or, as the Chinese regime termed them, "counter-revolutionary assassins." And there were reports that many students of the National University of Peiping were speaking boldly against the Chinese Communist party and its dictatorship. These students were termed "right-wing fanatics." Criticism also came from educators and public officials. Such deep and widespread criticism could not long be tolerated. Official statements made clear that it was being cut short. Premier Chou En-lai said that the invitation to criticize freely had been abused. Critics must now temper their remarks or be labeled "enemies of the people." And he emphasized that since Communists had come to power one in six "counter-revolutionaries" had been killed.

By now the Chinese Communist leaders and their American apologists should be able to draw the same moral. People who have long lived under an oppressive regime are scarcely to be trusted. If told they are to have freedom they will wish to act like it. If given a measure of freedom they will want more.

FOREIGN STUDENTS

SEVERAL YEARS AGO this magazine published an article by Dr. Lydwine van Kersbergen of the Grail on the duties and responsibilities of Catholics toward foreign students in the United States. At that time many readers were very interested in Dr. van Kersbergen's remarks, and they will be glad to know that NCWC has just brought out a leaflet on the subject which should prove helpful. Called "Hospitality to Foreign Students: A Challenge to American Catholics," it is available, at ten cents a copy or reduced rates for larger orders, from the Foreign Visitors Office, National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington 5, D. C.

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The Western Hero

"THE WORLD OF THE HERO IS A VIOLENT ONE, CLOSE TO THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES OF LIFE AND DEATH"

JOHN P. SISK

IT IS HARD not to be aware that the nation is suffering one of its periodic attacks of cowboy fever—probably the most virulent to date. In a week's time in my area you may see (indeed, have a hard time not seeing) over thirty half-hour TV westerns. Movie theaters are full of horse opera, not only class B quickies but wide-screen, full-color, all star extravaganzas. Magazine stands, pocket book and comic book racks bulge with westerns. Midway through last year it looked as though toy manufacturers would sell thirty million guns while clothing and novelty manufacturers hoped to dispose of a hundred and twenty-five million dollars' worth of juvenile cowboy gear. Meanwhile, the spacemen have departed, leaving no address; I haven't seen a Mouseketeer in months; and Davy Crockett abides with Heloise, Queen Blanche and the other snows of yesteryear.

There are many reasons why the cowboy (or Western Hero: in most instances he is not really a cowboy) is now riding so high in the saddle. After three generations of mythification his story (or the seven standard versions of his story) has come to stand in the popular mind for the truths it dramatizes: bad men never prosper; only the brave deserve the fair; honesty is the best policy; actions speak louder than words; virtue always triumphs; etc. Such a combination of colorful historical material and larger, if often naive, values is bound to do well.

The combination has all the dramatic advantages that make it a natural for popular fiction and drama. The Hero has been fixed securely in a morality pattern. Action and its moral meaning are the important things, not characterization: characterization even has to be slighted lest it clutter up meaningful action. The story works itself out with a minimum of talk: gunfire and hoofbeat expand the Westerner's Basic English. The world of the Hero is a violent one, close to fundamental issues of life and death: no place in it, least of all the town, can be considered a haven of order and security. It is a world in the making, in violent transition, a world of sharp contrasts and clear-cut issues. And there is always the scenery, the tremendous scenery, to give an epic magnification to the most parochial action.

In fact, the trouble with the West as a source of story material has always been an embarrassment of riches. It is too easy to succeed with it, and therefore little of lasting value has been made from it. One result is the endless repetition of sure-fire plot situations and the almost comic stereotypy of characterization, situation and plot. But doubtlessly this very repetition is a source of pleasure to the western fan. The repetition is ritual, incantatory. The world of the western story is ceremonial, as artificial and stylized in its own way as the Byzantium of Yeats' golden bird. The paradox is that it is so carefully documented in its surface details. But this too is an advantage, for nowadays we demand that myths be coated with realism.

BUT THERE IS another explanation for the popularity of the Western Hero. He is the mythical agency through whom, in the act of hero worship, we pass judgment on the world we live in, though often without being aware of what judgments we pass. In a sense, therefore, the Hero is a critic of society—not so much a critic who states his values (in which case they might appear immature, contradictory, and even frightening) as one who acts them out in story and symbol. This is, of course, a familiar function of the Hero in literature. He is a value-bearer, a measurer, a dramatic commentator on any age that finds him a compelling figure.

The editor of the anthology *Top Western,* writing as if he had been inspired by an editorial in *Life,* gives this as a reason for the immense popularity of western stories: "Though we are a peaceful people at heart, we let no one push us around, and find a warming kinship in reading of the Westerners who wouldn't be pushed either, and who so colorfully retaliated with six gun, fists, or lariat." There is surely some truth in this; people who don't like to be pushed around, or who think of themselves as non-pushable, probably do like stories in which such feelings are reflected.

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But it is just as likely that our adulation of the Westerner is a disguised admission that Americans these days let themselves be pushed around too much. The pushing around happens under the euphemisms of "security," "togetherness," "the group way," "community spirit," etc. The positions we get pushed into may be quite comfortable, but they gall us too, for to an ever greater extent we are where we are, or think and act as we do, because of forces outside ourselves which we cannot control.

The extent to which this lack of self-direction is good, bad or inevitable is another question, but at least it can be said that the forces responsible have not yet obliterated an opposed ideal image: that of the American as rugged individualist and shaper of his own destiny. The Private Eye dramatizes this ideal image in an urban context; and indeed, the Private Eye often strikes one as being an urbanized and sophisticated version of the Western Hero. He has simply come to town, swapped six shooter, buckskin shirt and horse for automatic, trench coat and convertible and hidden his essential ingenuousness behind a mask of cynicism that, out West, is proper only to villains. In town he still exerts the old attraction: in a confusing, anxiety-ridden and huddled-together time he is man-going-it-alone as he makes the forces of evil knuckle under. Seen this way, Wyatt Earp merges into Perry Mason and Jesse James (of one version) into Mike Hammer. Mason and Hammer, however, have the disadvantage of not standing knee deep in American history.

Our interest in both the Western Hero and the Private Eye is, in other words, our way of criticizing ourselves for a failure of heroic effort and our world for making the failure so easy. Though we may say with Orwell that "There are no heroes, only men who have been let off lightly so far," in our hearts most of us believe with Carlyle that "Hero worship endures forever while man endures," and that, as a corollary, all men are called to some measure of heroic action. "I leaned on a man who bent like a blade of grass," sings Virginia Mayo in *The Big Land,* and we know that we are that un-Ladd-like blade, at the mercy of every breeze. Hence the worship of the Western Hero is more than vicarious living; it is also the confession of an uneasy conscience, which the romantic idealization of our pioneering western past only exacerbates. Even the more sophisticated, whom horse opera apparently irritates or embarrasses, are often, one suspects, really irritated and embarrassed with the ineradicable appetite for heroics that horse opera discovers in them.

URBANIZED MAN is always hounded by fear that civilization is unmanning him with its excessive organization and its complexity of commitments, most of which, he feels, are not chosen but forced upon him. Therefore the Western Hero, though not uncommitted nor completely beyond organization (if he were he would have no story), is still conspicuously a liberated man. Ideally, he is a picaresque figure—for instance, Kit Carson—who wanders like a medieval knight from adventure to adventure, into each of which he throws himself with a selflessness that is a comment on our own inability to lose ourselves in a great cause. Everything he owns is on his back or in his saddle bags (in which, say the sponsors of *Texas Rangers*, you will always find a generous supply of Tootsie Rolls). He is supremely sure of himself; he calls no man boss; he is without family or civic ties. Women are delicate creatures he succors in distress, perhaps kisses lightly, stares at soulfully, promises vaguely to come back to someday—and then avoids like poison.

It is true that the western usually makes a concession to romance. For purely dramatic reasons it is hard to do without women. Not only do they look pretty on horseback, or foiled off against the wild country and the bad men, but they also serve as the Hero's reward when he has proven himself in the trial of manliness: to the brave go the fair. But it is a rare western that allows a woman, particularly a nubile one, more than a shadowy and abstract existence. There is no time to pursue her properly, even if there were an inclination. Even when the Hero eventually wins the girl, a real marriage of the two is unimaginable (which is one reason why Wister's last chapter is a sad mistake). Characteristically, there is not even a reference to marriage, only the not too passionate kiss, which the audience may interpret as it wishes. A typical relationship is that between Kitty Russell and Jim Arness in *Gunsmoke,* one of the better TV westerns. So far they have kissed only in a commercial. They are just friends.

What one begins to suspect, in fact, is that the Western Hero expresses for the modern American male his feeling that sex as he knows it, and is overwhelmingly assaulted by it, is a tyranny, and that woman will unman him in proportion as her sexual function overfascinates him. So if in the world of the western there is a symbolic escape from the obligations of normal adult life, there is also an implicit explanation of why the escape is so necessary: because modern civilization has made a normal sex life so difficult that one is forced to counter it in fantasy with the idyl of a Man's World. There the Hero may front as a furious idealist about women, and place them on a pedestal, the male's familiar device for desexing them and getting them out of his life.

In the Man's World sex can be taken care of by prostitutes and other free-lancers, for instance by saloon entertainers: lacquered beauties hard as nails who can meet men on their own terms and who lack

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the feminine qualities that make for permanent entanglement. We cannot have it entirely this way in the western, for this shocks the civilized conscience, that ambivalator of popular myths. We can, however, have it both ways: the Bad Girl meets the Good Man and it is discovered that deep down inside she has been a Good Girl all along. This is a reversal of the more usual situation where male experience succumbs to female innocence. But in the western the male is usually an innocent, and the touchstone of his innocence is his shyness and wariness before the sinister mystery of womankind. Woman, we have the western say for us, is the tempter and corrupter, the devious one; man is by nature—a sadly fallen nature—simple, pure and forthright, with a deep-seated longing for the clean, uncomplicated life of the wide open spaces.

A GREAT DEAL of fun is poked at the Western Hero because of his limited range of facial expressions and his restricted vocabulary. But this too is as it should be. In the real modern world, upon which the Hero comments for us, we are too emotionally susceptible to too many experiences, and therefore too controlled by them. Therefore the Hero in the Man's World must be something of a stoic. His face does not express many feelings because he is on top of his feelings, even in moments of greatest stress. He expresses for us the belief that because we feel too much and too conflictingly we cannot act in a straight line. Besides, we prefer that the Western Hero not feel some things at all, for they are feelings that civilization has taught us only to corrupt us.

And so with the Hero's taciturnity. In the Man's World actions speak louder than words: fists and six gun do the talking. If you mean to head someone off at the pass you simply say so and then go do it; Jamesian subtleties and qualifications will only delay you till the rustlers get through. The thing is that the Western Hero doesn't say much because he hasn't got much to say. He is our conspiracy of silence against the things we don't want to hear because we hear too much of them and are too confused by what we hear. Through the Western Hero we say that the confusion is an artificial and perverse creation of civilization, not the result of our failure to master a really complex situation. Therefore the Hero, a blood brother of Wordsworth's Noble Dalesman, confines himself in his feeling and speaking to the essentials. In his dialectical involvement with urban civilization his argument is the old argument from nature.

Of course, the Western Hero is still a part of civilization, if only a fringe dweller enjoying fringe benefits. If he were quite outside he would be useless as a critic. The interesting thing about him, especially in TV and movies, is the frequency with which he is a champion of established law: a sheriff, a marshal, a Wells Fargo detective, or a quixotic free-lance serving law and order. TV westerns, in fact, almost fawn over the law and its established order.

Is this simply the result of TV's desire, in a time of probes and blacklists, to place itself beyond the shadow of a doubt? Or to bundle action, history and uplift into one neat package? Both possibly, but more. Ideally, in so far as he expresses our grouch about the urban and civilized shape of things, the Hero would be a romanticized Jesse James or Billy the Kid, taking the law into his own hands in the interest of a purely personal law or, antinomianly, in the interest of a law beyond man-made law. But this impulse in us points towards chaos and we draw back frightened from our secret wish. Security has corrupted us. So the Hero gives it to us both ways: he is Man Alone, close to nature, uncorrupted, but championing law and order so that the secure, corrupting city can be built. For the same reason the Hero is so often in league with those symbols of civilization, the preacher and the teacher, who may also be The Girl. But when the chips are down and the heroic, ego-intoxicating music begins to ring in his ears, the Hero brushes both aside (as does the Virginian, who could not love them half so much loved he not honor more).

ALL OF THIS is a bittersweet daydream laced with nostalgia. Fifty years ago Owen Wister wrote: "But where is the buffalo, and the wild antelope, and where the horseman with his pasturing thousands? . . . he will never come again," as if he were Ulysses or Aneas remembering the mighty days of Troy. Similarly, the western story is shot full of our regret at having missed a chance at epic stature. The heroes are gone, the times unpropitious. This is the effect that heroes have: they cast a discouraging shadow; they give us an excuse for not trying. So far as the Western Hero genuinely compels us, he is as much an expression of our despair as he is of our recognized need for heroic action.

Heroes try to force their definition of heroism on those who come after them, as if to eliminate future competition. Perhaps with heroes of the first rank the gain to civilization is worth the price. But the Western Hero is one of those who cost too much. He and so many other objects of popular adulation tend to blind us to the significant heroes among us, those whose accomplishments, however without glamour, are the ones that will save us. "Be like us or be nothing," the glamorous dreamland heroes say. If we let ourselves be caught in that dilemma we make clear not only our dissatisfaction with our times but our inability to understand either them or the dissatisfaction which derives from them.

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Catholics under Communism

ROBERT A. GRAHAM

WITH THE WAR'S end, the Soviet Union found itself in a position to extend its political system, based upon a materialistic conception of society, to vast areas containing strong Catholic populations. It thus came, for the first time, into massive conflict with the Catholic Church. The intervening years have been dramatic ones, perhaps unparalleled in the history of the Church. The bishops and faithful have been forced to exist under conditions of exceptional difficulty. They have had to fight with spiritual arms against a foe who wielded political, economic and ideological weapons with skill and ruthlessness. It has not been a free competition in the marketplace of ideas but a process of attrition in which the odds, humanly speaking, were against the Church.

The two October revolutions in Poland and Hungary no doubt opened a new phase in the religious conflict just as they marked a turning point in the political situation behind the Iron Curtain. In Hungary, though Soviet power remains intact on the surface, many once-impressive Communist myths have been discredited. Cardinal Mindszenty is at least out of Red control. To the surprise of the free world, the instinct for freedom proved more powerful and effective than had been expected by those who had feared the long-term effect of Communist propaganda among the rising generation. The October 23 uprising was a political rather than a religious event. It is fair, however, to suppose that if a decade of Communist propaganda could not destroy the love of freedom it could not destroy the religious faith of the people.

In Poland, the change within the Communist empire took a milder form and lends itself more readily to examination at this time. With Moscow's reluctant consent, a sort of national Communism has entered the scene under the leadership of Wladyslaw Gomulka, once jailed on Stalin's orders as a Titoist. The new regime has been described as a "constitutional Communism." The term implies that it bears the same relationship to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 that the constitutional monarchies of the mid-nineteenth century bore to the French Revolution of 1789. However valid this analogy, the fact remains that the Gomulka regime today has more popular backing than any Communist regime has ever received. Will the Church fare any better, or at least any differently, in the new order?

TO JUDGE the future one must first take a look at the general situation of the Church behind the Iron Curtain today. Catholics under Communism since the war fall into three groups.

Some parts of Catholic East Europe have been incorporated into the Soviet Union and bear the full weight of its anti-religious bias. This is the case of the Baltic states. Catholics were most numerous in Lithuania but they were also well-organized in Latvia and Estonia. These were mostly of Latin rite. A second group consists of Catholics of the various Eastern rites in union with the See of Rome. These lived chiefly in the portions of Poland, Czechoslovakia and Rumania which were annexed to the U.S.S.R. after the war. Towards the Eastern rite Catholics, the Soviets have been particularly ruthless. The bishops and priests have been killed or deported to Siberia while the faithful have been forced into schism. Like Rachel, the Church bewails these children "because they are not." Similar forced schisms have been carried out by the Communist-style regimes elsewhere. This is particularly true of Rumania, but it has also happened in Czechoslovakia. In Rumania, even the Latin Catholics have been (officially) forced into schism, although the resistance here has been particularly heroic and distinguished. In Bulgaria, the small community of Catholics, mostly Latins, has been virtually dispersed. The last bishop in Albania died a few months ago.

The Church in the third group, in areas closer to the edge of the Iron Curtain, faces a more encouraging, because more fluid, prospect. In Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia there is still room for action. This is also true of East Germany and Titoist Yugoslavia which are even more exposed to Western influences and more under the eye of the free world.

As far as the Latin Catholics are concerned, the Communist ideal would be to extend to the "popular democracies" the same regime of laws to which the Baltic Catholics are now subjected. In Lithuania today, for instance, the Church has only the right to exist

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and to perform sacramental and liturgical functions. In accordance with Soviet law, it is a criminal offense to teach the catechism to minors. Recently Moscow has allowed the installation of a new bishop and a seminary is allowed to function. But the Catholic prelates are reduced to the same subservience experienced by the non-Catholic religious leaders. When needed, they are called upon to affix their signatures to Soviet propaganda appeals. Otherwise they can exercise no independent role in the life of the country. What now subsists in Lithuania is but the shadow of a once-flourishing Church.

If Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia have escaped this fate, it is not for lack of effort by the Communists. The attack upon the Church has been directed against both persons and institutions. Arrests and deportations are, of course, routine procedures. On the eve of the October revolutions, the Church had been progressively stripped of the external aids it needs to carry on its mission: its schools, its press, its organizations, its welfare and humanitarian activities. What is more sinister, the Communists were partly successful in their attempt to infiltrate the hierarchical organization by spiriting away the rightful bishop and then imposing their own compliant candidates as Vicars Capitular. Confusion was also introduced into Catholic ranks by the encouragement of the "patriotic priests" and especially of the "progressive Catholics" of the Pax group. It became difficult to discern which instructions or directives from the bishop's office were authentic and free and which were inspired by the Communist commissar at his elbow. Meanwhile, government-backed propaganda ridiculed and undermined religious belief.

This policy, hurtful as it was to the Church, nevertheless brought diminishing returns to Communism, especially in Poland. One of the first things that Gomulka did when he became First Secretary of the party on October 21 was to release the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Wyszynski, Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw. This move indicated eloquently enough the failure of the old Stalinist policy. The Polish news

service *Inter-Catholic,* of New York, rightly interpreted it as signifying that the regime cannot govern and develop the country without at least the limited collaboration of the broad masses of Catholics. This, in turn, made indispensable a normalization of relations with the Church. The subsequent course of action by the hierarchy shows that they judged the moment favorable to come to a tentative agreement with the new Red regime. On December 8 the terms of a provisional settlement of some points at issue were announced. Most significant of the concessions was the government's pledge to introduce religious instruction wherever the parents requested it.

IT IS YET too early to determine the real value of these concessions. Cardinal Wyszynski himself stated on December 9, "The principle that religion is necessary in the schools has triumphed." This is no mean achievement, if true, in a state supposedly run on Marxist principles.

From the standpoint of the bishops the new agreement does not represent a striking change of attitude. The Polish church has always followed a policy of conciliation in its relations with the Communists. On April 14, 1950 the episcopate entered into a more complete agreement with the regime. Their willingness to negotiate at that time was repaid by the subsequent bad faith of the regime.

In view of this experience, the December 8 agreement is striking evidence of the sincere wish of the Church leaders to find, for the sake of the conscience of the faithful, some kind of *modus vivendi* even with the professedly anti-God regime. Ever since his release, Cardinal Wyszynski has exhorted the people to patience, unity and order. The Church leaders have taken the calculated risk that religion will benefit from the stabilization of Polish economic and political life under the Gomulka regime.

The support given to the new regime by the hierarchy has, in fact, gone so far as to surprise many persons in the West, since it seems at variance with the warnings issued by the Holy See against cooperation with Communism. Pope Pius XII may perhaps have alluded to this difficulty in his Christmas address when he took up the question of building a "bridge" with the Communists and of preserving "mutual relations." The Pontiff distinguished two kinds of such contacts: those carried on by responsible civil or religious officials and those carried on by individuals or groups. The latter kind he warned against in severe tones. The former, however, was permissible for the common good. "That is sufficient," he said, "which competent ecclesiastical authority decides it should do to gain recognition of the Church's rights and freedom."

As Pope Pius spoke subsequent to the December 8

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agreement his words can be taken to refer to the policy of the Polish hierarchy. It might not be wrong to suppose that, for their part, the Polish bishops had the Pope's Christmastime distinction in mind when they gave their indirect support to the National Front.

As for the danger that the bishops' example may encourage the "progressive Christians" to carry on their program of baptizing Marxism, this has been greatly reduced by the collapse of the Pax movement. This group, headed by Boleslaw Piasecki, had already been hard hit by the condemnation of its weekly *Today and Tomorrow* by the Holy Office and by the simultaneous condemnation of Piasecki's basic exposé entitled "Essential Problems." Pax was finally discredited when it supported Soviet intervention in Hungary and sided with the Stalinist faction opposing Gomulka. None of the almost two dozen known Catholics who ran for parliament on the National Front ticket were members of Pax. These candidates proclaimed the practical necessity of cooperating with the regime for the good of the country, but they did not essay to reconcile Marxism with Christianity.

THE STATUS of the Catholic Church behind the Iron Curtain will be greatly affected by the fortunes of Gomulka's new-style national communism. A return of the Stalinists to power would be the signal for new difficulties for the Church. On the other hand, the "Polish solution" may find its imitators elsewhere, perhaps first in Czechoslovakia. As of present writing, however, no hint emerges from Prague that the illustrious Archbishop Joseph Beran may soon be released from his eight-year detention. In Hungary, the conditions for a solution in the Polish way are practically non-existent.

The contrasting situations in Poland and Hungary thus paradoxically constitute motives for optimism and encouragement. The original Communist offensive has thus far fallen short of its mark. But the present meager rays of hope for the future should not blind the eye to the damage done already in the past.

The Church has suffered unqualified disaster in the loss of millions of Eastern Catholics forced into schism. It contemplates with foreboding the future of the Baltic Catholics, left to wither on the vine. We do not really know what harm has been done to souls in the remaining, more favored, Communist-dominated areas.

Perhaps the postwar decade can at least be looked upon as a tribulation visited upon a chosen people for its purification to the glory of God. The heroism and faith of the Church behind the Iron Curtain are a tribute to what prayer and the grace of God can accomplish against the power of man and Satan.

LESSONS OF THE PAST

Education Then and Now

THOMAS MOLNAR

THE GREAT DEBATE over education — its critical condition and conflicting philosophies — remains too often a quarrel of sects, more preoccupied with improving their strategic position than with the quality of instruction given to the youth. Especially the Deweyites, semi-Deweyites, and quasi-Deweyites are guilty of sectarianism in educational matters, since, according to their narrow perspective, nothing worth while had been done before the present "age of science"; in the nebulous past, they contend, teachers were mainly concerned with means of cruelly repressing the young's yearning for self-expression.

Yet is it not evident that the extreme variety and richness of past civilizations bears a different testimony? If only we approach them without the prejudices of professional progressives, we become aware of the existence of profound educational philosophies in ancient Greece, the Middle Ages, the Jesuit colleges, etc., far less dependent, incidentally, on social and economic conditions than Marxist and para-Marxist thinkers would have us believe. The latter, indeed, tell us that the liberal instruction given to the offspring of ruling classes had its counterpart in the toil and tears of millions, and then conclude that the accent on contemplation and intellectual excellence cannot be justified in a society of working men and women. If their theories are to prevail, then in the schools of the future liberal arts must yield to the vocational and civic training of all citizens, while more or less informal public and private agencies will assume the job of filling their leisure time with superficial cultural activities, cut to the size of hobbies.

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It is the merit of books like Henri Marrou's *History of Education in Antiquity* (Sheed and Ward, $7.50.) to call attention to an aspect of education which is, as a rule, only timidly defended in the present controversy. I mean its thesis, demonstrated through the Greek example, that in the preparation of the young for life, the school must emphasize stable principles and the constants of culture as well as, or more than, vocational readiness and the observance of social mores.

Now it is often asserted that in our century of revolutionary transformations the ideals and methods of former ages have lost their validity; that the rhythm of these transformations has become so fast and feverish that it is not sufficient to register them passively and try to adjust to them, but that *change* itself ought to be made the focal point of a new philosophy, guiding the lives of modern men. Translated into the language of education, this philosophy would impose on the schools a whole new concept of *intelligence* and *culture,* the first being defined as adaptability to new conditions—social, organizational, and technological—the second as a routine familiarity with the problems and tensions of modern living. A compatriot of Professor Marrou, the economist Jean Fourastié, wrote recently in regard to the proposed reform of the French educational system: "We must give our children a culture which is not general in the sense of knowing a large number of facts, but general insofar as it facilitates the understanding of the facts they will encounter during their adult lives."

But would young adults, thus "prepared" for the tasks and responsibilities of life, not lack precisely that *philosophical habit* (emphasized by Cardinal Newman) which may serve as a guiding line in their future conduct? We see before our eyes that once the much-reviled "facts" of general culture are discarded from the curriculum, their place is taken by such household hints as studying the local fire station, making telephone calls, opening a bank account, or ironing a shirt —all this in the name of a dynamic philosophy of education. And we see also that this philosophy, enthroned in our schools, produces only distressed social units which congregate not where great ideals create their magnetic fields, but where the stagnant waters of conformism are shallowest.

The era of technology has been hailed by educators because it confers upon mankind the benefits of a longer period in the schools, and of more leisure opportunity in adult life. But a wrong inference is usually drawn from this double blessing: confused educators indeed conclude that the responsibility of schools consists, henceforth, in providing their students with means of finding jobs and with the latest tricks of majority-approved living. As I recently heard a professor of education say, "we cannot teach our pupils the subject-matters because the textbooks do not keep up with the advances of knowledge. We therefore teach them how to adjust to the rapid changes which take place in society." It did not occur to the lady just quoted that, as the young live now a much less sheltered life than, say, fifty years ago, the social and technical know-how and the bits of of information they pick up in the world around them ought to be balanced, *in the schools,* not by further emphasizing the routine of daily life, but by creating durable ties with the wisdom of ages.

WHAT DO WE mean by this protean term: wisdom of ages? Here M. Marrou, an erudite historian and a sensitive man, is of great help. Education in Greek, Hellenistic, Roman, and even early Christian times was built, he writes, on the "unified collection of great masterpieces existing as the recognized basis of the scale of values." The knowledge of the poets and the philosophers, the use of their sayings, the quotation of time-honored lines from Homer and Pindar, from Sophocles and Plato, were the indispensable equipment of an educated man, a cultured mind, a good conversationalist. A bookish learning, the educators-for-change might say, but as Marrou remarks, in these books a whole world was represented; the schoolchild and the adult, the citizen and the magistrate could, with equal profit, use the outstanding works of antiquity for gathering information on a variety of matters and for discussing the problems of humankind therein explored.

Homer, whom the Byzantines of the eleventh century still called a "sea of discourse," served as an inexhaustible textbook for history, geography, travel, oratory, political science, while his work was also an adventure story, a teacher of crafts, and—Plato notwithstanding—a model of bravery and honor. So with many other works: the tragedies, the treatises, the dialogues, the voyages, the mythological tales, the orations. These master books formed the center of learning and the system of reference; they were the guarantee that culture and education would tend in the same direction and not pull apart as in our days, to form two closed circuits, engaged in a dialogue between the deaf.

Did this education lead to stereotyped patterns, lifeless learning, idle repetitions? The student of ancient culture knows that the opposite is true, that the incredible richness of speculation, science, art, and literature, flourishing on the Mediterranean shores, could not be brought forth except by original and curious minds. This education which M. Marrou describes as hard, severe, demanding concentration and mastery of details, was, therefore, a training for intellectual and moral excellence. Its aim was—and this may strike

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the modern reader—not the development of the child, but the formation of adults. The Ancients, says M. Marrou, would have laughed at our ponderous studies concerning the educational value of games, although they engaged in sports and athleticism. "Nothing could be more unlike the modern progressive school methods than the system of education, with the analytical character of the exercises and severe discipline, practiced in ancient Greece. . . The only point of education was to teach the child to transcend himself." Accordingly, *paideia* was not a method for the indoctrination of children, but a preparation for *humanitas;* "classical education was interested in man himself, not in equipping technicians for specialized jobs. This is what distinguishes it most sharply from the education of our own time which makes it its first aim to produce the specialists required by a civilization that, to a quite fantastic extent, has been invaded by technology and split up into fragments."

Let us not cause alarm: nobody wants to "turn back the clock," and adopt the Greek standards in twentieth century schools. If the Ancients were satisfied with producing "persons with intelligence, insight, and good judgment," it was because they believed that such a person could easily and quickly learn the practical side of any profession or trade, without long and strenuous training. This may no longer be the case. An immensely increased and still expanding knowledge demands of the specialist more time and energy.

But there is more: for better or worse, society today is unwilling to leave its hard-won prosperity and security to chance, and it imposes on all its members the discipline of industrial production and a tight social routine. One consequence is the narrowing margin between the preparation of the young and the expected results in terms of immediate, practical usefulness. Investment per head—whether by individuals or by the government—in specialized education like medicine, engineering, scientific research, etc. is so high in terms of time, money, and something we might call social responsibility, that professional guidance and specialization will, predictably, begin at ever lower levels of schooling. Search for talent will then mean elimination of human waste.

Under these circumstances, liberal education, having no urgent social demand and no pressure group behind it, might well become a luxury administered to aging business executives as a relief from strain, but it will take less and less time off the exacting curriculum of future scientists, doctors, and technicians. It is hardly necessary to point out that other, formerly liberal, professions—education, psychology, social work—are following the same path and paying less attention to a wide humanistic formation than to mastery of trade.

Yet it is essential that we should not end up in the narrow niche of specialisms, communicating only at the level of television entertainers. Naturally, the members of modern, pluralistic societies may not be able to gather around any one of the "master books" like Homer, Plato, Virgil, the Talmud, or even the Bible. The *Summa* of this age fills libraries, and no learner may encompass even the elements of all essential knowledge. But precisely for these reasons we need, more than ever, a *common vocabulary,* to be drawn from sources old and new. We need what M. Marrou calls "a common denominator between all types of intelligence, uniting writers and public, the classical and the moderns." The question that we will ultimately have to solve is whether education should be limited to satisfy the ad-hoc requirements of daily life, or allowed to shape freely the minds of men.

ON DAVID'S PORTRAIT OF A GRANDNIECE

(She was killed by horses the day it was finished.)

When David painted my aunt's perfect child
he drew gold in her hair and bluest eyes.
Her slipper lifted up the light and she was
gentle, well organized and fair.

Nothing fell from left or right, daylight
was a burning leaf on a distant figure
of a hill. She was vacant, forced with light,
and on her mouth grief trapped a smile.

A child's beauty makes cherubim one plus one.
She renounced her blood that day and sat
like putting down of candle in the night
to wait the artist's breaking of the clay.

She spent long days in a chamber near the street
where horses hid and groaned for breakfasting.
And when artistry had tried her eyes too much
she peered beyond and cried a sorrow for the world;

She saw the shadow of her noontime self
shoot out upon the street and in a gust she
ran across the room into the sun to find
the garden and the animal of her morning mind.

O beauty dies and cherubim release themselves
from God and hurtled from a dark and hidden hand
wild horses broke their straps and crushed her down
like pagans tear at ladies in the holy land;

Walls shook and lovely pictures fell
the world moved with loudness in the night
for numbers multiply again when cherubim divide
for nothing's left but mirrors and their other side.

NED O'GORMAN.

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THE UNWANTED ISM

CHIEF JUSTICE Warren asked in his Watkins decision, "Who can define the meaning of un-American?" This is something that has bothered me for a long time.

I think that if any general consensus of American belief and practice were drawn up, I would qualify as fairly average. I belong to one of the major religious groups. I vote with one of the two dominant parties. I have no unorthodox economic views. I believe in such hallowed American institutions as the public school, the two-party system, religious tolerance and labor-management collaboration. And as one Commonweal-reader wrote recently, I have a blind spot on pacifism. You might well call me a conformist. But for all that, I don't like talking about an idea, a religion, or a viewpoint as "un-American." I don't like to hear democratic socialists called "un-American." I don't like it when Mr. Blanshard and his friends describe certain Catholic religious beliefs as "un-American." I don't even like it when Southern segregationists are called "un-American."

The word itself is what bothers me. Its use presumes that there is something called "Americanism." Often as this word is used, few are ready to give it a very precise definition.

Talk about an *ism* and you usually have in mind a body of doctrine of some kind, a set of beliefs. During the McCarthy controversy I hesitated to use the word "McCarthyism" because it seemed that the thing that went by that name was not so much an ideology as a mood. It could not be equated with, say, socialism or capitalism, Freudianism or Zionism. It was not a body of ideas but a series of reactions—a syndrome, if you will, rather than a synthesis.

The word "Americanism" is even trickier. And "un-American" is the trickiest of all.

There is certainly such a thing as treason and the word "conspiracy" has meaning. With these concepts kept in mind, there is rhyme and reason in describing the Communist movement as "un-American." In the same sense the Communist movement in Sweden is "un-Swedish"; in Italy it is "un-Italian." But if we heard about a Royal Commission on Un-Swedish Activities, the words would strike our ears—and probably the Swedes'—as strange. We have grown used to hearing "un-American." It does not sound strange. I think the reason is that we are coming to identify the nation's ideas and ideals with a kind of ideology. We tend to believe that the good citizen is the *believing* citizen.

But take any commonly held American belief and you can find some law-abiding citizens who do not hold it. There are agnostics and even atheists who are model citizens, in the sense that they keep the laws and work for the temporal welfare of the whole nation. Norman Thomas, our most distinguished socialist, is generally honored as an elder statesman. I know some otherwise model citizens who do not believe in public education. In one of the most "pro-American" of all right-wing publications there was an article a few years ago urging "Separation of School and State." One occasional contributor to this magazine and to several aggressively "conservative" publications endorses monarchism and would like to see the Holy Roman Empire revived.

If there is such a thing as "Americanism," what does the Americanist believe? What is he expected to believe? How rigidly orthodox should he be?

There is no secular equivalent of *Roma locuta, causa finita est*. It has been said, rather, that we have here the Civilization of the Dialogue—an agreement that discussion is unending and no debate is finally closed, though in the practical order general agreement is usually reached and we act accordingly. That way we are not paralyzed by indecision but neither are we forever committed to a bad idea. Again and again we have learned how much we need the wisdom found only in that second sober thought. On many great questions we seem to have reached an abiding consensus. But a consensus is not an *ism*.

I have long thought that the emphasis should be placed not so much on content as on method. The one thing that holds us together, that we can demand from one another, is agreement on the democratic method. We don't have to agree that the majority is always right. We don't have to embrace faith in the mystique some find in democracy. But if we are to survive and prosper, it seems that we do have to agree that all will abide by majority rule and respect the rights of the minority. We have to abide by the processes of orderly government, however wrongheaded or addlepated we consider the incumbents to be. We have to agree that whatever the changes we would like to make in our nation's thinking and way of doing business, we will abide by the democratic rules in our efforts to bring them about. And—the one substantive belief—I think we have to agree that the law knows no heresy; nor indeed does it know any orthodoxy.

If the nation's best thinkers set out to answer Justice Warren's question as to just what is "un-American," I won't be a bit surprised if the answer is "Americanism," for it may be the special genius of our nation that it scorns all *isms*—even "Americanism."

JOHN COGLEY.

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THE SCREEN

BIG CITY BLUES

IT WOULD ALMOST seem that the movie makers were conspiring with the heat wave to drive city dwellers into the country. Four new films consider various aspects of city life and come to not particularly happy conclusions. The first, "Dino," concentrates on a juvenile delinquent, a seventeen-year-old boy fresh out of the reformatory, angry and resentful against the whole world. Fortunately for the film, which was well directed by Thomas Carr, Sal Mineo is practically perfect in the title role as he expresses contempt and hatred and at the same time a hunger for love and understanding. Dino resents his parole officer (Frank Faylen), the psychiatric social worker assigned to his case at the Settlement House (Brian Keith), and his parents, particularly his father (Joe De Santis), who never visited him at reform school, who is annoyed at the boy's having to report at the Settlement House, and who is likely to beat up his son every now and then just on general principles. Dino has affection only for his brother, a youngster who adores him and wants him to join his youthful gang in a holdup they are planning.

Obviously "Dino" is not a pretty picture, but it is a thoughtful one, thanks to the sincerity of its makers. Reginald Rose, who wrote the good script from his television play, understands people and psychology; and while the scenes with Mineo and Keith struggling through Dino's psychotheraphy are painful to watch, they are fascinating for their portrayal of analytical procedure. Once the initial rebellious steps are over, Dino realizes that everyone has problems "but some take care of them better," and the case worker begins to understand the reason for Dino's tough behavior. Dino begins to understand his antagonism towards his father; and fortunately outside events help to work out other problems. Wisely, the film doesn't try to solve all problems, but it does start Dino on the road to recovery when he thwarts the attempted holdup and plans to bring his young brother to his friendly case worker. Like "The Young Stranger," another of this year's pictures about an erring boy, "Dino" points at parental delinquency. It also points at the crowded city.

JERRY LEWIS, who has portrayed a problem child before, plays another misfit in "The Delicate Delinquent." Its opening scenes are almost an exact duplicate of "Crime in the Streets" or "Dino" or any of the films devoted to the behavior of junior gangsters. But it turns out that Sidney (Lewis), who is caught in the midst of a gang war and is picked up by the police, was only emptying the garbage. Poor lonely Sidney is even misunderstood by the police. One cop in particular (Darren McGavin), determined to save at least one juvenile from delinquency, concentrates on Sidney who isn't a future criminal at all and is so hopelessly inept he can't even change a light bulb. The big-hearted policeman's efforts to help Sidney are confounded not only by Sidney but also by an interfering woman from the City Council (Martha Hyer) who uses the cold Park Avenue type of sociology. But the cop knows how to win friends and influence people, so much so that Sidney, convinced till then that he's been a failure, decides to become a cop like McGavin.

No doubt Jerry Lewis, who produced "The Delicate Delinquent," and Don McGuire, who wrote and directed it, started out with a good idea. Lewis tries to combine comedy and pathos as Harold Lloyd used to do so successfully but works too hard at it. Many of the scenes are entertaining: Lewis can be touching when he's a lonely, mixed-up kid and very funny as a student policeman in the slapstick episodes, but while he proves his versatility at running the gamut, he just wears out his audience.

AUDIENCES who see "Sweet Smell of Success" are likely to wonder what kind of a city is this New York in which policemen, at the command of a newspaper columnist, beat up the innocent and guilty alike. But these same audiences, after the first ten minutes of this picture, must realize that it is one of the most cynical movies ever made, even more cynical than "A Face in the Crowd." Its script, about a ruthless and desperate Broadway press agent and an even more ruthless and powerful newspaper columnist, was written by Clifford Odets and Ernest Lehman from Lehman's novelette, and is as phoney as the publicity business it concentrates on. But the film was expertly directed by Alexander Mackendrick, handsomely photographed in New York streets, restaurants and bars, and is well acted throughout. Excellent in the repellent lead roles are Burt Lancaster, as the sinister columnist who thinks he's a god who can make or break people, and Tony Curtis, as the press agent who's willing to do any kind of dirty work in his dog-eat-dog publicity business. When the columnist gives toady Curtis the unpleasant job of breaking up the romance between Lancaster's sister (newcomer Susan Harrison) and a nice, likable nightclub entertainer (Marty Milner), the press agent, who has already displayed his talents as a cheat and pimp, sinks to a new low; he spreads a story about the young entertainer's being a dope addict and a Communist, and later, to get the boy in real trouble with the police, Curtis plants marijuana on

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him. Although "Sweet Smell" tries to end on an upbeat by having the columnist's sister escape from his evil influence, it leaves its viewers asking questions about how its characters got that way, what makes Tony run, what's the implication behind Burt's objection to his sister's marriage, how corrupt are New York's police, is big city glamor only tawdry tinsel and what price success? "Sweet Smell" doesn't answer any questions and it doesn't smell very sweet.

NEW YORK is of course the locale for "Beau James," and the movie is presented as a love story between a man and a city. Although it romanticizes Jimmy Walker, the film gives a fairly good picture of New York in the flaming twenties and early thirties. Producer Jack Rose and Director Melville Shavelson also served as scriptwriters; they based their screenplay on the more vivid episodes in Gene Fowler's book but the main trouble with it is they didn't go far enough. Greatly helped by Bob Hope's excellent performance in the lead role, "Beau James" catches well the appeal and charm of this dapper, playboy mayor; and it covers effectively the unpleasant aspects of his career from 1925 when Al Smith (Walter Catlett) suggested he run for mayor, until 1932 when Mrs. Walker (Alexis Smith) consents to a divorce and Jimmy leaves for Europe with actress Betty Compton (Vera Miles). The film doesn't duck Walker's estranged marriage, his open scandal with Miss Compton, his negligence and incompetence in office, the Seabury investigations that finally put Tammany's Golden Boy on the spot, the embarrassment he caused Al Smith, who frowned on Walker's affair with the actress, or the even greater embarrassment he caused Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt, who had to hear and decide on the charges against Walker just when the presidential aspirant was worried about his own political future.

"Beau James" could have been a better movie if it had looked into Walker a little more searchingly and if it had shortened the playboy episodes to make room for the last and most interesting years in this man's complicated life—his restless married years with Betty, his unhappiness after their divorce, his odd living arrangement with her second husband and the children after her death, and finally his return to the Church. As it stands, "Beau James," neglecting Walker's youth and old age, tells only a third of the story—the heyday years filled with glamor and Jazz Age irresponsibility and immorality. Perhaps the film won't endear the world's largest city to viewers, but they will agree that voters get what they deserve (the playboy mayor was re-elected once) and that, of all its citizens, debonair James J. Walker once typified New York.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

OF NOTE

THE POPE "TAKEN IN"?

IN ENGLAND recently, Lord Cherwell criticized the position of Pope Pius on nuclear weapons, questioning his knowledge and implying that he had been duped by Communist "ban-the-bomb" propagandists. His charges were then taken up and amplified in an article in *U.S. News & World Report.* Father Edward A. Conway, S. J., formerly of *America* magazine and now at Creighton University, answered these charges in a recent issue of the *Catholic Messenger* (407 Brady St., Davenport, Iowa). Substantial excerpts from Father Conway's remarks follow:

The USNWR article used Lord Cherwell's insinuations to support its argument that the Communists have cooked up most of the opposition to the H-bomb tests . . . [Lord Cherwell] said:

"This sort of thing becomes particularly obnoxious since various universally respected figures like the Pope (Pius XII) and Dr. (Albert) Schweitzer have been persuaded to intervene.

"How they could allow themselves to be taken in by the inaccurate propaganda of the friends of Russia is hard to understand . . . Frankly, I am surprised that men in high positions without scientific knowledge or exact information could brush all this aside and issue appeals on quantitative scientific questions which they are really not competent to judge."

The impression did get abroad that Pius XII had backed the Japanese protests against the British tests. The impression is based on a profound misunderstanding of the Pope's position. Before we can clear up the Pope's action in his recent audience with Professor Matsushita, we must clear up a misleading statement . . . [in] the USNWR article. USNWR says that in his 1955 Christmas Message, the Pope "appealed for an end to testing of nuclear weapons."

In that Christmas Message, the Pope did call for an end to H-bomb testing, but not as a separate measure, independent of any overall arms control agreement, as is implied in the USNWR article. He tied the ban on testing to two other measures and insisted that all three must be agreed on as a unity. This is far different from what the British Labour Party recently advocated (simply an end to bomb-testing) and, of course, even farther removed from the position of the Japanese who wanted the British to cancel their tests unilaterally.

What the Pope called for in his 1955 Christmas Message was a three-part package including: (1) renunciation of the testing of nuclear weapons; (2) renunciation of the use of nuclear weapons; and (3)

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effective air and ground observation to ensure compliance with the first two agreements.

This shows: (1) the Pope well understood the need for a "package deal"; (2) he wanted, not unilateral disarmament by any nation, but an international agreement; and (3) his conviction that a halt to the nuclear arms race is a moral imperative, not something dictated merely by economic considerations, as some people contend . . .

The USNWR misstatement of what the Pope said in his 1955 Christmas Message has two seriously bad effects. First, it makes his position sound similar to the Russians', i.e., simply stop the H-bomb tests, encourages the suspicions of persons like Lord Cherwell and compromises the Pope's influence for peace. Second, and even worse, anyone who truncates the Pope's program for peace (as it was truncated in the USNWR) plays into the hands of the Communists who already claim that the Pope agrees with them . . .

We are now ready to look at the question of whether Pope Pius XII intervened in the British controversy over H-bomb tests. . .

The fact is that the Pope began to "intervene" in the whole question of how to use nuclear energy as early as Feb. 21, 1943, two years and four months before the U. S. detonated the first A-bomb at Alamagordo, New Mexico. In an address on that day to the Pontifical Academy of Science, comprising 70 of the world's leading physical scientists—Catholic and non-Catholic—the Pope gave a detailed and accurate account of a nuclear chain reaction in uranium based on a report by famed physicist Max Planck, then a member of the Academy.

The Pope noted that Planck had said that no one could yet think of a way of "gaining any technical profit from such a tempestuous process." But the Pope, who, according to Lord Cherwell, is "without scientific knowledge," warned that the process should not be used to produce an explosion, but that it should be curbed by "suitable and vigilant chemical means." Otherwise, he declared, "there might follow, not only in the installation itself, but throughout our entire planet, a dangerous catastrophe."

The Pope's first "intervention" of 1943 was followed by many others as the arms race accelerated and the dangers from new weapons increased. Pieced together, the Pope's statements from then until now comprise a complete pattern for peace that is distinctively his own. I think the dual proposition can be sustained that the Pope's position on arms control, as elaborated over those years, is not only independent of the position of both East and West, but exhibits features neither possesses.

It is true that the Voice of America broadcast, following the Pope's 1955 Christmas Message, made the claim that the Pope's three-point arms control "package" was identical with the West's. But Joseph C. Harsch, the *Christian Science Monitor*'s astute Washington correspondent, pointed out in a dispatch dated Dec. 30, 1955, three differences.

The Vatican, Harsch noted, thought that the danger from test explosions was greater than did the United States. A second implied, and "much more subtle," difference concerned the use of nuclear weapons in warfare. The third difference lay in the Vatican's concern for all peoples, while the U. S. was primarily concerned with the security of the West.

Mr. Harsch's significant conclusion was that "the Vatican now has a position which, although closer to that of Washington, nevertheless lies between Washington and Moscow."

Keeping in mind the Pope's independent and universal approach to this problem, let us now examine what happened when he granted an audience to Japan's special envoy, Professor Masatoshi Matsushita.

The Pope received Professor Matsushita on April 14. As far as I know, no record of the interview was published. But the very fact that the audience was granted gave some ground for the assertion that the Pope supported the Japanese demand that the British cancel the Christmas Island H-bomb tests. . . Some time after the audience, from which no communique issued, the Pope delivered to the Professor a short note, to which was appended an "exhibit" containing very brief summaries of nine Papal statements on nuclear energy made between 1941 and 1956. . .

First, the note does not mention the British H-bomb tests, nor any request for support from the Japanese envoy. It begins by observing that the destructive power of nuclear weapons has now become potentially unlimited. It deplores the fact that "both sides" are increasing the terror in the world by exchanging nuclear threats. It urges that "scientists of all nations and all beliefs" try to master nuclear energies for "the service of man" instead of wasting scientific "activity, labor and materials" in preparation for a world catastrophe. The note ends with this sentence: "Scientific, economic, industrial and even political organizations should support with all their power efforts aiming toward the use of these energies on a scale adaptable to human needs."

Although the translation of this note could, I suspect, be improved, the statement as a whole could hardly be more generalized. . .

By means of the "exhibit," the Pope showed that he intended to maintain his independent position which he still hoped both East and West would finally agree to. I think he did maintain that position intact and that the Japanese, who are far from obtuse, understood from his necessarily round-about response why he could not officially go any farther with them.

I mentioned earlier that there are significant features in the Pope's position on nuclear arms which

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are possessed by neither the East nor the West. I want to discuss three of those features here, not only to indicate his universal, independent approach to the problem of peace, but also to indicate the realism of his position based on astonishingly exact and accurate knowledge of nuclear facts.

First, on the matter of radioactive fall-out hazard from H-bomb tests, it is notorious that our Government suppressed the facts concerning the extent of the fall-out from the March 1, 1954 H-bomb test until Feb. 15, 1955. Yet the Pope accurately described what had happened in his Easter Message of April 18, 1954. . .

Another distinctive feature of the Pope's position was his early opposition to the formula for peace popularized by Sir Winston Churchill—the so-called "peace of mutual terror." This "balance of terror" theory is closely allied to the belief in this country that "the deterrent of massive retaliatory nuclear power" is our best guarantor of peace.

The Pope rejected this thinking in his 1954 Easter Message when he asked: "When will the rulers of nations realize that peace cannot consist in an exasperating and costly relationship of reciprocal terror?"

The third distinctive feature of the Pope's position is his emphasis that it is the arms *race* that must be stopped. . .

This new arms race does not consist, essentially, in the continuing production of conventional or even of already developed unconventional weapons, but in the continuing competition for even more destructive unconventional weapons and their delivery systems.

The Pope warned about this race in portentous terms in his Easter Message of April 1, 1956: "The human race almost loses hope of being able to stop this homicidal, this suicidal madness. To increase the alarm and terror, there have been developed modern radio-guided missiles, capable of traversing enormous distances, to carry total destruction to men and things by means of atomic weapons. In order, then, that nations may be checked in this race toward the abyss, we once again raise our voice, asking for light and strength from the Risen Christ for those who control the destinies of nations."

. . . Contrary, then, to the views of Lord Cherwell and of others who would adopt his views, the Pope is hardly the ignorant, Communist-beguiled or Communist-inspired Johnny-come-lately to the problem of the nuclear arms race. His words and his actions through the years have been distinguished for their knowledgeableness and universality. He has proved to be a sagacious, experienced, foresighted and courageous counselor whose advice we should neither disdain nor distort.

BOOKS

An Author of Few Pieties and Few Illusions

MEMORIES OF A CATHOLIC GIRLHOOD. By Mary McCarthy. Harcourt, Brace. $3.95

By JOHN W. SIMONS

MARY McCARTHY is master of a clean, aseptic, disenchanted prose which she has heretofore used to give a fictional rendition of life's minor ironies. In *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* she uses it, somewhat muted, to discover the varied and discordant personalities who superintended her own debut into the human comedy. Orphaned early, Mary and her three brothers were parceled out to relatives, first on the paternal side (Irish-Catholic), then on the maternal side (Protestant and Jewish). The scenes and the people did not have to be invented. Novelist McCarthy simply had to draw on her memories (buttressed by those of her brothers) to create a series of satires of circumstance.

The author is a woman of few pieties and few illusions, and we have come to expect her to express with supreme diffidence any admiration for her fellow human beings. All the same, it is when such admiration, carefully controlled, invests her reporting that we get her most compelling portraits—those of the frustrated Miss Gowrie, her Latin teacher, and of her Jewish grandmother. Even so, it is the ironist who has the last word. Our final glimpse of Miss Gowrie is in a restaurant where, belching over a *flange,* she seems to be the very essence of bewildered unfulfillment. And our final glimpse of the ancient grandmother is on her deathbed, where, speech now gone, she makes a mute appeal for the lifelong handmaiden to her vanity, a mirror.

To say that the memories here recorded, no matter how instructive and diverting, are unreliable is not to call Miss McCarthy's honesty into question. This is an undeniably sincere book and a book very seriously intended. How sincere and how serious are indicated, first, by the long apologia which precedes the first section; second, by the corrective epilogues which attend each of the original essays. Still, it is fairly obvious that the adult who records and comments unconsciously modifies the sensibility of the child who experienced. And it is also obvious that on occasion the *memoiriste* has succumbed to the impish blandishments of the fictionalist.

To the ordinary reader these modifications will not seem of any great significance. He will read and enjoy the essays for the same reason that he reads and enjoys Miss McCarthy's novels—for their secure

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mastery of language, their witty criticism of men and manners, their loveless probing of illusion. But the Catholic reader will be disconcerted. He will wonder, first of all, why Miss McCarthy chose to place the word "Catholic" in the title. Except for the chapter on her brief stay at a Seattle academy run by the Madames of the Sacred Heart there is almost nothing "Catholic" in these reminiscences. At the age of six she went to live with a Catholic aunt and a Protestant uncle, and it is the relationship with the uncle which dominates her memories. At the age of ten or so she comes under the guardianship of a Protestant grandfather and a Jewish grandmother. At the age of eleven or twelve (while in the Catholic academy to which her non-Catholic guardians honorably sent her) she lost her faith. The last half of the book has nothing to do with Catholicism, whether as a religion or a culture.

The Catholic reader will also wonder how much fiction has got into the account of her dialectical clash with the two priests. We are asked to believe that a girl of eleven confounds her adult interlocutors with a shameful ease. In her epilogue to this incident the author admits that the account is "highly fictionalized," though she vouches for its essential authenticity. The present reviewer finds it difficult to believe that a woman who at forty-four argues so unimpressively against Catholicism (the whole section on "To the Reader") can have been so intellectually formidable at the age of eleven.

The truth is that for some reason or other Mary McCarthy cannot exorcise the memory of her Catholic heritage. She grows angry, sometimes almost hysterical, at the thought of possible re-conversion. Her tone alters when she speaks of Catholicism, and she touches nothing in Catholicism that she does not subtly caricature. Why this is so is a story beyond the overt story which is recorded in these pages. She is certainly a sincere writer, but the "dry self-knowledge" which she acknowledges as her fate can be a self-destroying knowledge. That, at least, was the experience of a near-contemporary of hers, Thomas Merton, who, starting from where Miss McCarthy has arrived, came at last to the Faith from which she took such an early, complete, and uneasy departure.

A Wrench of Pity

THE FEAST OF LUPERCAL. By Brian Moore. Atlantic-Little, Brown. $3.75.

By RICHARD HORCHLER

LIKE *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne,* Mr. Moore's widely-praised first novel, *The Feast of Lupercal* is a study in sterility and defeat. And like the first, this novel too is suffused with "consciousness of place"—the place again Belfast and the ghetto-world of Catholics in that Protestant city. Joyce felt suffocated in Dublin, and fled; but there was life in Dublin, even violent life, and there was love.

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Brian Moore's Belfast is loveless, a city of negation, oppressed and obsessed by the sense of sin.

Belfast's victim this time is Diarmuid Devine, a male spinster, counterpart to Judith Hearne. Devine is a lay teacher of English at a dreary, prison-like Catholic prep school. He is weak-eyed, balding, and unhealthy of appearance; timorous, foolishly vain, and mournfully aware that he is no longer young. He is absurd, but too much in pain to be a figure ot fun. Then the sameness—and safeness—of his life are destroyed by the intrusion of an unknown and dangerous element — love. Love comes to Diarmuid Devine, and to Belfast, with Una Clarke, an alien. She is young and pretty, but more important, she is a "modern," careless of convention, guiltless and free. She is an exotic in that sin-ridden Calvinist-Protestant, Jansenist - Catholic city, and to Diarmuid Devine she is everything wonderful.

He courts her like a schoolboy—eager and frightened, amazed that she should find him attractive, even more amazed at his own audacity. And it is, in his narrow world within a narrow world, truly audacious for him even to be seen with her, a Protestant, a smoker of cigarettes, rumored to be "fast," to have had an affair with a married man. But he is intoxicated, and he doesn't care. He vows to throw off his chains, to seize the fruit of pleasure so long and furtively desired.

He does not, of course. It was never possible that he could. His rebellion goes no further than pitiful gestures like dancing lessons and shaving off his moustache. His test of liberation is, inevitably, sexual, but when Una offers herself to him he flees in panic, and at the first pressure from authority his rebellion melts away. He is afraid—of the priests, the scandal, the sin, the sexual act itself. Caught up in the wages of his almost-sin, he lies to save himself disgrace, and as he betrays the girl again and again, again and again he whips the youthful Diarmuid Devines who are the pupils in his class.

There is even crueller irony: when it is too late, when all the hurt and harm are done, Devine speaks up. He makes his act of defiance, and it means nothing, except that he is flogged, as in Rome the barren women were flogged on the feast of Lupercal. And it all ends with a whimper.

It must be acknowledged that Mr. Moore is the possessor of rare novelistic gifts. He has intimate knowledge of his people, the way they live and the way they think. He can establish a character with a quick, incisive stroke: early in the book, Devine defends his questioned manhood by claiming to "have as many sinful thoughts as any one . . ." Mr. Moore has an eye for significant detail, an ear for the natural rhythms of Irish speech. He is an impeccable stylist, and the language throughout—most of it Devine's, since this is his story—is brilliant even for its meanness and vulgarity. The first scene of the novel, typically, is a lavatory, with Devine engaged in "pumping ship." Even Devine's agonized reflections on the fact of his sexual inadequacy are couched in crudely depressing terms: were there many others, he wonders, who were also "secret flops"? Finally, and perhaps most impressively, Mr. Moore's new book, although not technically the virtuoso performance the first novel was, reveals an uncommonly sure sense of structure, is also an ingeniously crafted work of art, rich in symbol and allusion.

Without doubt, Mr. Moore has written another noteworthy novel, and yet it is a disappointment. It is no more—although no less—than a second version of *Judith Hearne,* less in intensity but wider in scope, and offering only the same dismal vision. Mr. Moore has used his gifts only to trace again the familiar pattern of defeat at the hands of "the enemies" Joyce wrote of—Ireland, Church, and family. But Joyce made his indictments forty years ago; and he was passionate—he meant "to forge . . . the uncreated conscience of my race." What does Mr. Moore feel, beyond this weary, noncommital irony? What are we to feel, beyond a momentary wrench of pity?

Never-Never Land

THE BRIDGE. By Pamela Frankau. Harper. $3.75.

By JEAN HOLZHAUER

PAMELA FRANKAU, whose previous novels (*The Willow Cabin; To the Moment of Triumph; A Wreath for the Enemy*) have earned for her a reputation for sprightliness, this time has attempted a perilous assignment. *The Bridge* is the story of a man's experience after his death as well as —in a series of flashbacks—before.

David Neilson, boy, man and shade, is a romantic, stubborn fellow whose sense of guilt identifies many of his acts as sins even while they are being committed. In this divided mind he allows a boyhood companion to endanger his life, perpetrates a rejection of his mother, permits with a sentimental lie the occasion of his daughter's death, and withholds the support that might have prevented his wife's suicide.

This, for a gentle and quiet man, is an imposing list of offenses, and it is not surprising that the character does not come off. Despite David's frequent self-scrutiny and interior pain, it is difficult to feel that he knows what he is doing; his muzzy ignorance seems psychologically invincible; one wonders, indeed, whether his suffering is the legitimate result of his deeds or of a congenital condition.

The never-never effect unfortunately is heightened by Miss Frankau's rendition of his after-life, where he arrives on a bridge among a crowd of disembodied companions and traverses the misty distances between flash-backs with his guardian angel in tow. When he reaches the farther shore a gate opens, music swells, the lights go up, and three familiar figures (his mother, his daughter and his suicide wife) stand inside, arms outstretched to greet him.

One can note that the props in this heavenly tableau are frayed with literary usage, but beyond the note, critical faculties are at grave disadvantage. It is impossible, for

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example, to comment on verisimilitude. How embarrassing if—after their own series of painful purgatorial flashbacks—the critics should find heaven to be exactly as Miss Frankau pictures it. And how disappointing.

Plays and Analysis

ARTHUR MILLER'S COLLECTED PLAYS. With an Introduction. Viking. $4.95.

By GERALD WEALES

ARTHUR MILLER is probably the most conscious artist working in the American theater today. The artistry is not always admirable, is often unfelicitous, but it is unmistakable. The introduction to this volume, a detailed analysis of the processes that ended in his five published plays, is evidence of his artistic awareness. His attempt to explain how each play took shape as he worked on it, his description of the impetus that brought him to his subject, his account of his search for a unity of style and substance —the poem, as he calls it—is a valuable contribution to the literature of the theater. Very few playwrights seem to understand the methods by which they write; fewer have tried to articulate them and those that have (Noel Coward is the best, if most unlikely, example) ordinarily resort to theatrical anecdotes or to platitudes borrowed from dramatic criticism. Miller's introduction is excellent because it is specific, focusing on particular problems, plays and emotions.

Miller's essay is not needed, however, as proof of his careful control of his material. The reading of any one of his plays will give testimony enough to that quality in its author. Every line in a Miller play is there because it belongs there; there is nothing superfluous, no poetic additions, no emotional excitation, certainly no comedy for its own sake. A recognition that this is true, however, is not a blanket acceptance of the quality of the necessary lines or characters. There are speeches in Miller's plays, like Linda's "attention must be paid" in *Death of a Salesman,* that seem to reach out and make too insistent a demand that the audience listen, that it react. The speech is not wrong in Linda's mouth—except that it is a little rhetorical for her—for she is trying to convince her sons that they have a duty to their father. Yet, as I read the lines, I do not see Linda demanding something of Biff, but Miller demanding something of me. I want him to show me Willy's destroyed potential as a human being, not simply to insist that it is there. In the same way, the lawyer in *A View from the Bridge,* the involved observer, expatiates on the story of Eddie Carbone in a way that detracts from the tragedy instead of heightening it. Yet the presence of the lawyer and the quality of Linda's speech are exactly what Miller intended. They do what he wants them to do. The quarrel is with his wanting.

Miller's power as a playwright lies in his understanding of and compassion for human beings in their most personal relationships—with the members of their family or with themselves. The essential dramatic conflict of his plays—except for the ruminative *A Memory of Two Mondays*—is familial. The conflict of father and son in *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman* and the triangles of *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge* are immediately engrossing. Miller knows how to show two people working to hurt one another when the genuine impulse of each is to offer love. He is not satisfied with domestic tragedy, however; he attempts to reach beyond it, to place the personal conflict on a moral rather than a psychological level. In *All My Sons,* Joe and Chris Keller are fighting about man's duty to society as a whole. In *Death of a Salesman,* the antagonism of Willy and Biff grows out of Willy's societally-induced dream of success, which is to Biff and to Miller (for all that Charley is on stage as a balance to Willy) a false one. In *The Crucible,* the theme is "the handing of conscience over to another. . . ." Eddie Carbone's actions in *A View from the Bridge* are not simply condemnable in the abstract, but in relation to the attitude of his environment to the informer.

However, the themes of Miller's plays often seem to be in conflict with his characters, which is surely not his intention. The one should grow out of the other. The best example is *Death of a Salesman.* Willy Loman is Miller's most completely realized character, so alive that he steps out of the thematic frame of the play. In his introduction, Miller insists at length that the play is a growth from a random collection of images, all centering around the salesman figure, all expressing in some sense the futility of Willy's life. But the play is more than a chronicle of a beaten man, even one who went down fighting. For Miller, Willy's tragedy lies in the fact that he had an alternative that he did not take, that having chosen the wrong star he reached for it until he died of stretching. According to the introduction Biff represents "a system of love which is the opposite of the law of success." The conflict of these opposites—which may not really be opposites —is confused in the play by an idea that runs throughout, one that can be summed up in Biff's words at the grave, "He had the wrong dreams." If this phrase means simply that Willy wanted power and prestige when he should have wanted love, then what is the meaning of the often repeated indications that Willy was good with his hands, the suggestion that had he been an artisan his life would have been less futile? Willy is so carefully conceived as a victim of self-delusion—the flashbacks indicate that from the beginning he lied to himself and to others about his present as well as his future—that it is impossible to conceive of him as ever having a right dream. The theme of the play is swallowed by the excellence of the character who should embody it.

There are two possible solutions to the conflict between theme and character, as Miller himself indicates. The playwright can let the action of the characters express the theme—the method of naturalism—or he can voice it directly. In *All My Sons* Miller tried the first; since

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then he has been slipping gradually toward the other. Jim, the next door neighbor in *All My Sons* is a tentative *raisonneur* who attempts now and then to state the opposition between Joe and Chris. The characters in *Salesman*—particularly Biff—and in *The Crucible*—especially John Proctor—speak more fully and more consciously of the problems they face. The lawyer in *A View from the Bridge* is the culmination of this drift; he stands outside and comments on the action.

Miller's particular virtue as a playwright is his ability to uncover the emotions of his characters in dramatic situations. When they are presented nakedly, not masked with explanation, they can command an audience as the Kellers did in *All My Sons*. The emotional power of that play was so strong that it was possible to ignore the fact that, at the climax of the play, Miller trotted out the old theatrical gimmick, the revelatory letter, to put the *coup de grâce* to his protagonist. The problem of the non-naturalistic approach for Miller is that his facility with language is limited. In all of the plays, awkward and unlikely phrases leap out at the ear. In the ones in which natural speech is intended, such lines can perhaps be explained away on the ground that the speaker might actually have used them. A man like Happy in *Salesman* might really have said of his mother, "What a woman! They broke the mold when they made her," and an actor might get away with it, but a writer who uses it is approaching parody. The lawyer's speeches in *A View from the Bridge* are less easy to accept. They are consciously literary and unfortunately they are portentous and occasionally—"his eyes were like tunnels"—disconcertingly false poetic. In the introduction Miller writes, "We have had more than one extraordinary dramatist who was a cripple as a writer, and this is lamentable but not ruinous." He is thinking, surely, of Eugene O'Neill. Arthur Miller is another good playwright in the O'Neill tradition. He writes serious and moving plays on important themes in language that often weakens what it should strengthen.

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Claire Huchet Bishop
in The Commonweal,
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